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**Vaya Health Continues Partnership with Local Law Enforcement to Offer Crisis Intervention Team Training**

**BREVARD, NC** – Vaya Health continues to make an impact in communities by training local law enforcement officers and first responders.

First responders from Henderson and Transylvania counties are now better equipped to respond to people experiencing a behavioral health crisis following a 40-hour training. Vaya Health, a public managed care organization serving 31 counties throughout North Carolina, coordinated the training at no cost to participating agencies.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training is a program designed to improve safety for officers, first responders, and people in crisis. The program can help connect individuals to appropriate services and support behavioral health needs, strengthen ties with the community, and reduce arrests.

First developed in 1988, CIT programs have been implemented by communities throughout North Carolina and across the country. The model helps reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, substance use disorder, and intellectual/developmental disabilities and provides a forum for more effective problem-solving and interaction between local criminal justice and mental health care systems.

“It’s a dynamic and educational class that deep dives into the mental health of individuals or groups in crisis. I have been using my skills on a day-to-day basis as an officer,” said Cody Cline, Transylvania County Detention Officer.

Vaya’s CIT programs are tailored to meet local needs. Courses provide advanced knowledge and skills to de-escalate crisis situations and link individuals to treatment. Classes are led by behavioral health professionals, experienced officers, family members of people with a mental illness, and people in recovery.

“This course has proven useful in all aspects of life. The duration of this course is one week, during which time instructors give valuable information and real-life scenarios. Overall best-continuing education course I have taken – I highly recommend this course,” said Cline.

A total of eight participants from five law enforcement agencies participated in the training in Lenoir. Those agencies represented include Brevard Fire Department, Transylvania County Sheriff's Office, Brevard Police Department, Fletcher Police Department, and Henderson County Sheriff's Office.

Programs like the one completed in Henderson and Transylvania counties represent a partnership between communities and their first responders, mental health and substance use professionals, public health plans, individuals with lived experience, their families, and other advocates.

**To learn more about Vaya’s CIT program, visit:**

<https://www.vayahealth.com/get-help/education-training/crisis-intervention-team-training/>

### **About Vaya Health**

Vaya Health is a specialty managed care organization that oversees publicly funded behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability services across a 31-county region of North Carolina. Vaya manages Medicaid, federal, state and local funding to meet member and community needs while advancing whole-person health. Together with our members, provider network and local partners, we’re moving forward to a healthier North Carolina. Access to crisis assistance is available 24/7 at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at [vayahealth.com](http://vayahealth.com).

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